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MATWATCH

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VOL. 1, NO. 33

Live on NBC

ULTIMATE SEVERANCE: HULK HOGAN,
RANDY SAVAGE SPLIT OVER "LUST
FOR ELIZABETH"

TED DiBIASE DEFEATS HERCULES
HERNANDEZ WITH ASSIST FROM
VIRGIL & HANDFUL OF TRUNKS

MILWAUKEE - The stage was set for a Hulk Hogan-Randy Savage WWF title match at WRESTLEMANIA V when the Hulkster and Macho Man ended three months of tensions Friday night in a first aid station at Bradley Center in Milwaukee. Live on NBC's MAIN EVENT, Savage attacked Hogan with the WWF belt and accused Hogan of having eyes that "lust Elizabeth," the Megapowers' manager and Savage's wife. The attack followed the Megapowers' win over Akeem and Big Bossman, singlehandedly finished by Hogan with a legdrop on Akeem and pin in 24:36 of a match in which Savage walked out on Hogan two minutes before the end.

In the other NBC feature event, Ted DiBiase pinned Hercules Hernandez in 7:30 of a match in which Hernandez was the early aggressor and had DiBiase in the "human torture rack" until bodyguard Virgil distracted the referee. DiBiase rolled up Hernandez for the pin by using the tights for leverage. Herc attacked DiBiase afterward, but Ted made a quick run.

THE HOGAN-SAVAGE DETAILS:

After a discussion on who would start, Hogan went to the offensive early and cleared the ring at 2:10, finishing with an atomic drop on Bubba. But Bossman rallied for a vicious clothesline on Hulk and a piledriver for a 2-count at 6:10. Bubba tallied another near-fall at 7:44 with an Arn Anderson spinebuster. Savage finally tagged in at 8:38 and scored a 2-count after a cross body block on Akeem. But Savage was thrown over-the-top at 10:00 and then made a vicious crash into an unsuspecting Liz at 10:24, knocking Ms. Poffo cold. Hogan, seeing both Poffos down, immediately comes to the aid of Liz. As Savage revives, he appears angry at the sight of Hogan hovering over Liz but is yanked back in the ring by Bubba. Hogan scoops up Liz and---camera and all---we follow the path to the first aid areas as Liz is stretchered.

The show spends the next eight minutes (with the exception of a 70-second local break) in the medical station with a grieving Hogan praying for Liz's recovery (NOTE: after the break, Hogan may have won the BLOOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD as he apparently was unsure of his cue and---in the midst of saying, "Oh, God, please let her live! Randy didn't mean it," ---Hogan looks up as if he's not sure he's on camera yet and says, "We need a countdown, or something," before apparently hearing Vince's voice and resuming the grieving).

Hogan finally returns to the ring to see Savage pasted by both Towers but at the 21:30 mark, Savage makes a miracle rally and tosses the two Towers out. He then "tags" in Hogan by slapping him in the face at 22:05 and, after a brief argument, Savage grabs his belt and exits. As Hogan appears to be facing sure defeat, he dodges a double splash and Bubba crashes into Slick. Hogan then legdrops Akeem for the pin at 24:36 and, after an attempted attack by Slick and Bubba, Hogan escapes the handcuffs and manages to cuff Bossman and his manager together before going hunting for the Poffos.

THE SPLIT:

As the cameras return to the medical station, Savage is admonishing Liz to stay away from Hogan when Hulk returns. After a pointing and shoving exchange, Savage says: "You've got jealous eyes right there...yeah...I'm not #3 in the Megapowers, I'm #1!" As Hogan tries to calm him, Savage tells Hulk, "Those eyes lust Elizabeth!" Savage then clobbers Hogan with the title belt and throws Liz aside when she tries to attend Hogan. Brutus Beefcake tries to stop a vicious Savage attack and gets decked. The WWF agents arrive and one of them is battered before order is restored. Jesse Ventura blames the whole affair on Liz, saying, "She's no manager! If she wants to dance to the music, she's eventually got to pay the fiddler."

MAIN EVENT MEMO: The opening, newspaper style graphics were very clean and attractive but McMahon attempting to sound like a boffo brute has to go. It's more grating every time I hear it.....Only a couple of significant flaws: the Hogan blooper and late audio a couple of times, certainly attributable to the live broadcast.....The angle itself was beautifully played and well-produced for television, though I have to believe people in the live audience had to be wondering what was going on backstage during the eight minutes Hogan was away..... The main match, itself, wasn't all that great because, in my view, Akeem's "hit me but I won't fall" act is becoming all too predictable.....Plus, the Twin Towers were virtually destroyed by Hogan's singlehanded Superman comeback. For them to keep their heat and to have more impact, Hogan either needed to be pinned (which we knew wouldn't happen) or taken a much more severe pounding after Randy left.....I also didn't like the end of the show that much because it reminded me (Hogan tossing aside three or four babyfaces in an effort to search room-to-room for Savage) of a hybrid of the end of the movie SHANE and The Midnight Rider trying to find Barry Windham.....But the first aid station was an inspired bit (even though only one attendant was on duty and he looked as though he knew as much about medical treatment as do I) and I'll rate the show PILEDRIVER, simply because it accomplished its purpose well in setting up the main draw for WRESTLEMANIA V....But the heat was so strong for the split, the crowd was almost dead for DiBiase-Hernandez.

NOTE: With only two matches, I won't rate this show on my 25-scale of categories but go with the PILEDRIVER scale as used in TV TEMPO.

TED TURNER POSTPONES "ULTIMATE GAMBLE" PPV SHOW; SOURCES
SAY TBS WILL NOW COUNTER WRESTLEMANIA WITH FREE SHOW FROM SUPERDOME APRIL 2

ATLANTA - WRESTLE WAR '89: THE ULTIMATE GAMBLE, originally set to battle Vince McMahon's WRESTLEMANIA V on pay-cable April 2, has now been postponed until May, according to Turner Broadcasting System officials. A TBS executive has told MATWATCH the company has decided the postponement "is in the best financial interests of cable operators, pay-per-view companies, and the consumer's interest." But MATWATCH has learned from other sources in the cable industry also stems from potential legal problems from the 16 cable operators and major PPV firms which originally asked Turner to produce the April 2 show.

WAR, which would likely have cleared seven million pay-cable homes, forcing Titan Sports to a smaller universe and a less-lucrative closed-circuit deal, was developed in part to retaliate against McMahon's airing of a free cable show on USA Network Feb. 20 opposite Turner's CHI-TOWN RUMBLE pay show. Cable operators and pay companies had asked Turner to produce the April 2 show, also in response to a Titan demand of a bigger share of the WRESTLEMANIA revenues from the PPV outlets.

But MATWATCH has learned from two cable executives who asked not to be identified, that legal advisers for some of the cable operators which hold 35% of TBS and a significant share of pay company Viewer's Choice, feared the firms may be vulnerable to antitrust actions if they united to block McMahon's show. In addition, USA Network is now involved in a court action against Jones Intercable, a company with 850,000 subscribers. A federal judge on Jan. 19 upheld the right of Jones to drop USA in favor of Turner Network Television. USA is claiming Jones breached its affiliation agreement. In the process, one source told MATWATCH "USA hates Turner" and has allegedly egged Titan on to air its Feb. 20 New York show live.

Though at press time, TBS officials had not confirmed this, MATWATCH has learned the NWA will now air a free show on WTBS April 2 from The Louisiana Superdome in a CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS format. A card for the proposed New Orleans show has not been determined. Turner Home Entertainment will follow up in May, according to stated plans, with THE ULTIMATE GAMBLE, which will give the NWA five pay shows during 1989. One veteran wrestling expert told us, "No matter what, both sides are going to be cost serious money again this year." As of last Wednesday, 3,000 tickets had been sold for WM V in Atlantic City while only 500 had been purchased for the NWA CHI-TOWN event.

IV TEMPO (Week of Jan. 30-Feb. 6)

SCALE: PINFALL! - Must See PILEDRIIVER - Excellent
POWERSLAM - Good DRAW - Average RESTHOLD - Fair BOMB
- Poor PLUS - Midscale rating.

(FLORIDA) - FLA. TAG TITLE: The Terminator/Johnny Ace d. Nasty Boys to win belts when Term uses object on Brian Knobbs. Scott Hall tries to save and is beaten. FLA. HWT. TITLE: Mike Graham d. El Diablo to retain belt; Al Perez d. Cliff Sheats and challenges Graham; Dick Slater d. Dick Murdoch as---during a ref bump--- Steelman tosses helmet to Slater to use. After, Steve Keirn tries to save and is doubled one until Dusty Rhodes saves. Rating: DRAW....Diamond Dallas Page does color with Gordon Solie.

(ATLANTIC COAST) - Nelson Royal d. Bob Emery; M.D.D. Squad d. David Isley/Ricky Nelson; Todd Champion/Tommy Angel d. Larry Stephens/George South; Ricky Gibson wins squash; Mitch Snow vs. Gene Ligon becomes tag match when Doug Somers & Scott Armstrong come out. Snow/Armstrong d. Ligon/Somers; Rock & Roll Express d. John Savage/Trent Knight. RESTHOLD.

(PACIFIC COAST) - Buddy Wayne d. Tama Samoa; Tiger Chung Lee d. Rip Oliver to win Pacific Coast title. BOMB-PLUS.

(PORTLAND) - Jonathan Boyd d. Rex King; Beetlejuice wins DQ over Al Madril; PACIFIC NW TITLE: Grappler d. Top Gun to win belt; TV TITLE: Carl Stiles d. Abuda Dein in loser-leave-town match; NW TAG TITLE: Col. DeBeers & Buddy Rose d. S. Rockers to win titles. Joey Jackson draw w. Mike Golden. POWERSLAM.

(SCW) - Ron Starr d. Keith Steinborn; Chic Donovan d. Nick Busich when Busich & Samuel Kent argue and Donovan rolls up; Georgia Power d. Lee Scott/Chance Myers; SOUTHERN TITLE: Ron Starr subs for The Bullet vs. Tommy Rich...match goes to double COR and wild brawl; Mr. Wrestling II/Ranger Ross d. Invaders. DRAW-PLUS.

(NWC) - Rufus R. Jones d. "Dr. Death"; TNT d. Don Kent; PUERTO RICO TITLE: Hercules Ayala d. Ricky Santana and declares title vacant; Victor Jovica d. Assassin II. DRAW-PLUS.

(CWA/SYND.) - Jerry Lawler/Wendell Cooley win DQ over Beauty & Beast when Ricky Morton & Dutch Mantel run in; Adrian Street/Bill Dundee d. Hollywood Blonds but B&B & Downtown Bruno run in before Miss Linda saves; Mantel/Morton d. Lee/Smith; Phil Hickerson d. Tracy Smothers with interference; Shogun & Samurai d. Raper/Frazier; Jimmy Golden/Frankie Lancaster d. Todd Morton/Scott Steiner. POWERSLAM.

(PWTW) - WWF, Royal Rumble clips; MCCW, Jeff Jarrett/Kerry Von Erich d. SST; CWA, Sid Vicious d. Frankie Lancaster but is jumped by Stud Stable; CMF, Brad Armstrong-Tom Prichard hair spray angle; STAMPEDE, Biff Wellington/Bruce Hart/Chris Benoit d. Johnny Smith/Cuban Assassins; SCW, Tommy Rich vs. Terry Gordy

double countout; PORTLAND, Grappler d. Bill Van Leet; NWC, Carlos Colon d. Kendo Nagasaki; INTERVIEW: John Studd. NARS WRESTLER OF WEEK: Terry Gordy.

(NWA/TBS) - [NCW]: NWA TV TITLE - Rick Steiner d. Pretty Boy Floyd; WORKOUT: Ricky Steamboat trains with Dustin Rhodes, Bob Cook, Ric Diamond before Ric Flair attacks but Steamboat rallies to military press Flair and tears Flair's shirt off; Midnight Express d. Terminators; JYD/Michael Hayes/Sting d. Cruel Connection/Max McGyver; Other winners: Varsity Club, Fantastics, Abdullah the Butcher, Barry & Kendall Windham, Butch Reed, Road Warriors, Dick Murdoch, Mike Rotundo. - REPLAY: Eddie Gilbert's nose broken by Flair/Windham. RESTHOLD...another decent Flair/Steamboat angle but 11 squashes is too many. [A.M.]: Varsity Club/Kevin Sullivan d. Terminators/George South; Steamboat d. Floyd; Other winners: M Ex, Only M Ex, Sting/Luger. INTERVIEW: Hiro Matsuda introduced as new rep of Japanese firm which has "bought the contracts" of the Horsemen. BOMB-PLUS. NOTE: This week's issue had to go to print prior to NWA MAIN EVENT.

(NWA/SYND.) - [NWA PRO]: U.S. TITLE: JYD wins over Barry Windham by DQ when J.J. Dillon (a farewell) and Kendall run in; Gilbert d. Jerry Price; Michael Hayes d. Eddie Sweat; Abby d. Randy Hogan; Other winners: Reed, Sullivan/Rotundo, Kendall. RESTHOLD. [WORLD WIDE]: JYD/Hayes/Ivan Koloff d. Russian Assassins/Paul Jones when JYD pins Jones; Al Perez d. George South; Abby d. Keith Steinborn; Windhams d. Mike Jackson/Mark Collins; Other winners: Gilbert, Reed, Sullivan/Rotundo; Steve Casey. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(CMF) - Austin Idol d. Pat Rose; Tom Prichard d. Duce Mason; Black Bart d. Tim Dawson; Terry Gordy d. "Russian Assassin"; Hunters d. Lee Peek/Richard Smith; Masa Chono/Mike Davis d. Bucky Sieglar/Brad Anderson. RECAP: Anthony/Stubbs-Rich Cousins saga. BOMB-PLUS...a real disappointment.

(MCCW) - Solomon Grundy d. Jim Ward; SST d. Dewayne Meadors/David Hinkel; MCCW LT. HWT. TITLE: Eric Embry d. Cactus Jack Manson to regain; J.J. Funk DQ over Super Black Ninja when Iceman Parsons runs in before Brickhouse Brown saves; ANGLES: Chris Adams challenges Jerry Lawler; Skandor Akbar offers Brown chance to join Devastation, Inc., before Parsons attacks and puts dress on Brickhouse. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(AWA) - Larry Zbyszko vs. Don Muraco double DQ; Greg Gagne d. Tony Leone; Sgt. Slaughter d. Frankie DeFalco; Wayne Bloom d. Jake Milliman; Manny Fernandez d. Sledge Sanchez; MAT CLASSIC: Dick the Bruiser/Mad Dog Vachon d. Jerry Blackwell/Ken Patera. ANGLE: Jerry Lawler stripped of AWA title for "failure to make mandatory title defenses" and is buried; Dusty Rhodes appears to say he'll be next AWA champion. BOMB!!!

(WWF) - [SUPERSTARS]: Bret Hart d. Danny Davis and chops Jimmy Hart; Ted DiBiase d. Sam Houston; Rockers d. Bob Blake/Dusty Wolfe; Anabolic Warrior d. Dale Veasey; Other winners: Terry Taylor, Bubba Rossman,

Rougeaus. REPLAY: King Haku d. Harley Race at ROYAL RUMBLE. BRO. LOVE v. Jake Roberts who scares Brother away with Damien. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

[CHALLENGE]: Greg Valentine d. Paul Bryant (this was taped in Birmingham---note the jobber's name); Brooklyn Brawler d. Dave Stoudemire; Brutus Beefcake d. Rusty Riddle; Other winners: Tito Santana, Tully & Arn, Hercules Hernandez. INTERVIEW: Mean Gene with Ron Bass. BOMB-PLUS.

(LTR) - Mark (Yannick Bisson) falls for his art teacher but when Miss Dixon receives flowers from "your favorite Randall," she thinks they're from Robert (Lyle Alzado). MATCH: Rick Steiner d. Executioner. RESTHOLD.

LINES OF THE WEEK - 1. Savage, NBC: "You've got jealous eyes, there. Those eyes lust Elizabeth!" 2. Arsenio Hall, ARSENIO HALL SHOW: "This is Ted DiBiase and his son, Ben Johnson." 3. Hall, "Virgil, you sang with the Pips one time, didn't you?" 4. Charlie Platt, CMF, to Jonathan Holliday: "If your picture is in a dictionary next to the words 'Universal Heartthrob,' I'd hate to know who wrote the dictionary." 5. Jim Cornette, TBS: "Capone died a broken man. Hitler blew his brains out. They fried Ted Bundy two weeks ago and Paul E., you're next!" 6. Paul E. Dangerously, WWW: "I'm a psycho yuppie." 7. Steve Keirn, FCW: "Dusty, I'm really glad to see you back in Florida but I hope you don't pull the same joke on me like you did last time." 8. Ric Flair, TBS: "The Japanese have bought up Hawaii. They're buying up the United States. If you've got the money, we've got the time." 9. Jerry Lawler, CWA: "If the referee hadn't stopped that match (at SCIII), Kevin Von Erich would be an only child." 10. Marc Lowrance, MCCW: "I wish Frank were here. I'm running out of voice." 11. Frank Dusek, MCCW: "These guys (Funk & Ninja) are like 2 magnets on the same pole."

12. John Studd, WWF: "Get in the ring with me, DiBiase, and I'll show you how to stretch a dollar." 13. Jim Ross, NWA PRO: "I hope Abdullah used his Old Spice...for Randy Hogan's sake." 14. Ross, TBS: "Abdullah is the most FINED---I didn't say REFINED---man in wrestling." 15. David Crockett, WWW: "Hot Stuff---he's a hothead." 16. Crockett, WWW (two for David in a week?): "This man (Abdullah) is so big, he can block the sun." 17. Cornette, NWA PRO: "Paul E., I've forgot more about being an S.O.B. than you will ever know in your entire life." 18. Jesse Ventura, LATER: "I just can't imagine Tommy Lasorda in a 6-string." 19. Arsenio Hall, "You've got scars on your head, Ted, from either fightin' or kissin' Virgil." 20. Ventura, NBC: "McMahon, if you had been around when Nixon was in the White House, he'd have still been President." 21. Ventura, NBC: "The match is wrestling, McMahon...not running Elizabeth to the hospital." 22. Hawk, TBS: "Kevin Sullivan, the only reason there's no fear in your eyes is you're dumber than a gas pump." 23. Holliday, CMF: "This guy (The Dog) reminds me of Einstein's twin brother." 24. Michael Hayes, TBS: "I ain't Elvis Presley and I ain't Frank Sinatra but I get

things done MY WAY!" 25. Terry Taylor, WWF: "Brawler, I've been where you think you're going."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Lee Marshall, AWA: "Jerry Lawler, you are a disgrace! I'm only sorry this man wasn't in the AWA earlier to kick your tail." 2. Ventura, WWF: "I'm more popular than Paul (Bear) Bryant here in 'Bama." 3. DiBiase, HALL SHOW: "Hercules, Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage are great big muscled up hunks of flesh with a cumulative IQ of 10."

LLOYD BENTSEN LINE OF THE WEEK - Eddie Gilbert, WWW: "Kendall Windham, you're no Horseman!"

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK - 1. Crockett, WWW: "I wonder where his (Abdullah's) waist is?" 2. Arsenio Hall, to DiBiase: "Do you have a girlfriend?" (to which an audience member yelled, "Yeah...Virgil.")

NICKNAMES OF THE WEEK - 1. Jim Ross, TBS, for calling Sullivan "The Jim Jones of pro wrestling." 2. Gilbert, WWW, for calling Butch Reed "the 250-pound outhouse." 3. Tony Schiavone, WWW, for calling JYD/Hayes/Koloff "The Odd Trio."

BEST PICTURES - 1. NBC, shot of Savage watching Hogan take Liz away. 2. NBC, Savage attack. 3. TBS, shot of Tommy Rogers in fan's lap. 4. NBC, closeup of DiBiase pounded into turnbuckle.

BLOOPER AWARDS - 1. Hogan, NBC, for "we need a countdown or something" when he thought he was off camera. 2. Reed, WWW, for still calling the year 1988. 3. Holliday, CMF, for referring to the host as Charlie PRATT.

BOO AWARDS - 1. Lee Marshall, ESPN, for tasteless burial remark of Lawler and, of all things, switching to the side of Larry Z. 2. AWA, for naming at least three wrestlers "Lawler has walked out on defenses" against who he was never scheduled to meet.

TUBE TALK: David Crockett's new NWA job is as a site manager. He'll scout locations before TV tapings are done. Told he's pouting about being off TV...Next week's WCW on TBS is one hour only...Too bad Jonathan Holliday couldn't clean up his tongue. He added some zest to the CMF mike...Jim Ross & Magnum need some time to jell. T.A. must get more opinionated and confident in his delivery...If anyone could call me the TV results of the live WWC Memphis show on Saturdays, please do so between 1-2 p.m. (CDT) Sat. We'll keep it short. Same goes for anyone with results of indie TV shows we don't cover.

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COMINGS & GOINGS

BARRY TO STAY: Barry Windham met with Jim Herd in Atlanta last Monday and reports are he's definitely remaining in the NWA fold, squashing talk (mostly by Dusty Rhodes) that Windham would either jump to Florida or the WWF.

STING SPEAKS: At this writing, Sting was expected to re-sign with the NWA but reportedly met with the WWF's Pat Patterson in Texas two weekends ago. Most observers believe that may be used as leverage in NWA contract talks.

OTHER SIGNINGS: Jim Ross & Tony Schiavone were both signed to new TBS contracts in the past week. Ross is now the permanent SuperStation honcho with Jim Cornette permanently on a.m. and Magnum T.A. on MCM (at least for now) as color commentators. Schiavone did his first two solo syndicated tapings Tuesday night in Marietta GA before a full house. Paul E. Dangerously teamed on one of the two.

EDDIE'S IN: Eddie Gilbert & Missy Hyatt signed a contract to buy a home in the Atlanta area last week, so that's a sign Hot Stuff is in for a haul. Jim Ross is putting his Texas home up for sale and moving to Big A. In addition, Dick Murdoch re-signed for a reported six-figure deal, making his tenure with Rhodes a short-lived one. Jim Cornette & the Midnight Express will talk contracts after the Feb. 20 PPV.

ON MIKE: Dangerously will be given his own DANGER ZONE slot on MCM soon and will rotate amongst the syndicated and a.m. shows as co-host. Word has it that WORLD WIDE will be THE syndie show where action develops in the NWA. Also, TBS is considering moving the Sat. a.m. show to Friday nights this summer.

NO BRIAN: Brian Pillman apparently now not headed in to the NWA---a disappointment from here. Pillman will go to Japan and apparently back to Calgary.

OTHER MOVEMENT: Billy Jack Haynes is rumored as a possible NWA addition but no firm word, nor on talk that Junkyard Dog may not be around much longer. Flair-JYD only drew barely 1,100 in Norfolk---no surprise from here as the card did little to follow up on the STARRCADE finishes.

In addition to the Blackjack Mulligan assistant booker hire, Paul Jones is becoming an agent, similar to the WWF system.

MORNING MIRACLE: I'm told the NWA a.m. show on TBS this Saturday is first-rate, for a change with a strong workrate and a hot main event between the 3 Varsity Clubbers and The Road Warriors & Paul Ellering. Told Ross shifts into such overdrive at the end that even Cornette couldn't keep up.

WHICH WAY, TERRY?: Gordy showed up at the NWA card in Chattanooga and hinted to some they may be seeing him with Turner "before long." Apparently, he won't become CWF booker.

CLASH FOR THE COAT: Bill Dundee and Jeff Jarrett both worked the CWF "mink coat" tourney at the Montgomery TV tapings Sunday night. Ron Fuller was also in, opening vs. Black Bart.

SAMOANS SO LONG: The Samoan Swat Team quit World Class weekend before last and apparently is headed into the NWA. Talk is they may feud first with The Fantastics if they're indeed coming.

COOLEY'S BACK: Mendell Cooley turned up again on the CWF looking like Black Bart, hat and all, with shorter hair.

HELLO-O, HIRO!: I'm sure you saw Hiro Matsuda's debut as the new representative of the "Japanese conglomerate" which has "taken over the interests" of Ric Flair, Barry & Kendall Windham and Butch Reed. I'd like some mail to gauge your reax.

BAD SUNDAY: The Armstrongs no-showed the evening taping of SCM two Sundays ago because of an afternoon auto accident involving Bob and Scott after they had worked an afternoon show in Carrollton GA. Injuries are said not to be serious.

TALK, TALK: Arsenio Hall's stint with Ted DiBiase on Jan. 31 was one of the funniest bits ever with a WWF wrestler. I still don't see how Virgil keeps a straight face. But this is the kind of show Turner's wrestlers are going to have to gain access to if they are to ever be regarded on a par nationally.

JESSE & BOB: On the other hand, Bob Costas played nothing but straight man for 30 minutes of Jesse Ventura the night before MAIN EVENT. And you wouldn't get anything else, seeing as how Dick Ebersol is executive producer of both LATER and the NBC WWF specials.

BAD BOYS?: The KTVT World Class show aired a video Jan. 28 promoting The Bad Boys (Buddy Landell & Tommy Rich). Guess what? Tommy & Buddy claim to know nothing about it. Tommy says he hasn't even talked to MCM and Landell is said to be negotiating with Titan.

CRYPTIC QUOTE?: Bill Dundee appeared in a MCM interview Saturday and during it, said: "There's a champion in another area who says, 'To be the man...you gotta beat the man.' I'm coming after you, too." Want to explain that one?

STEINER SAYS: This month's PRO WRESTLING DIGEST features an hilarious interview with Rick Steiner, who claims to have beaten Dr. Death "for the Oklahoma title." Get it and read it!

STEEL CITY: The AWA returns to Pittsburgh in early March, billing a Zbyszko-Patera title match on top, along with Slaughter-Iron Sheik in a Boot Camp II match. John Lanigan hopes to be there.

PINEALL PROFILE: CABLE'S 4TH QUARTER

	Rating	Households
1. NFL games (ESPN)	9.3	4,631,000
2. CFA games (ESPN)	3.5	1,743,000
3. Award Theatre (WTBS)	3.4	1,622,000
4. NFL PrimeTime (ESPN)	3.0	1,494,000
5. Andy Griffith (WTBS)	2.9	1,364,000
6. Prime Movie I (WTBS)	2.8	1,299,000
7. Sun. Afternoon Movies (WTBS)	2.7	1,285,000
8. WWF A.M. Wrestling (USA)	2.7	1,268,000
9. Flintstones (WTBS)	2.6	1,248,000
10. NFL GameDay (ESPN)	2.5	1,245,000

I cannot remember the last time only one wrestling series made cable television's top ten for a full quarter. From the days Nielsen began measuring cable services in the early 1980s, once they had penetrated 15% of the nation, at least two wrestling programs were on that list---and once as many as five.

The overwhelming popularity of NFL Football on ESPN, though down a point from 1987, always skews the sports network's averages to the sky. But only the Sunday morning edition of WWF ALL-AMERICAN WRESTLING, which did gain one-tenth of a rating point over the third quarter, cracks the elite for the final quarter of 1988, certainly continuing a declining trend for pro wrestling on cable.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING hauled in a 2.5, as did WWF PRIME TIME WRESTLING, ranking 11th and 12th, respectively (despite tying in total ratings, WCW ranks higher because TBS has a higher universe of homes than does USA). The NWA MAIN EVENT dropped to 19th with its 2.3 average. ESPN's AWA CHAMPIONSHIP show was not figured because shows must have eight airings during the quarter to qualify for measurement.

Why the continued drop? If you could have thrown out October, in which the NWA had one 2.0 and another 2.1 and 2.2 week, WCW probably would have cracked the list as the heightened angles in the waning days of Dusty Rhodes did pump up the numbers (though the two holiday weekend dips didn't help the average). WWF PRIME TIME, which took the biggest tumble from its third-place finish in July-September, switched nights from a weaker-rated Tuesday to a Monday midway through the period. Plus, until the Terry Taylor-Steve Lombardi angle recently, that show has become as dead for new happenings as the TBS morning show.

The ALL-AMERICAN show benefits from being in a weakly-competitive time period at noon Sundays---yet, while finishing eighth, was outpointed by 354,000 homes by TBS' Sunday morning AWARD THEATRE, the last hour of which faces the WWF head-on.

I would be willing to venture a trend of serious decline could be declared in April if the ratings continue to dip because audience levels are usually higher during the cold weather months, plus the four football programs taking slots in this top ten will be

out of the picture and not replaced by any cable programming similarly compelling. But the challenge to both the WWF and NWA is going to be producing shows which don't create the sense of sameness viewers are apparently perceiving in wrestling's cable product.

CABLE RATINGS RAP
(Jan. 21-23)

	Rating	Share
WWF PTW (USA 1/23)	3.8	5.6
WWF A-A (USA 1/22)	3.1	7.5
NWA WCW (TBS 1/21)	2.7	4.9
NWA MEV (TBS 1/21)	2.6	4.5
NWA AM (TBS 1/21)	2.2	6.2

(Jan. 28-30)

NWA MEV (TBS 1/29)	3.1	5.5
WWF PTW (USA 1/30)	3.0	4.4
WWF A-A (USA 1/29)	2.8	7.6
NWA WCW (TBS 1/28)	2.5	4.5
NWA AM (TBS 1/28)	1.6	5.0

(ANALYSIS: That PRIME TIME show of two weeks ago hit a watermark for regular cable airings, even topping the WWF Election Night special from Paris. Apparently, huge curiosity was up over the previous week's Taylor-Lombardi angle. Note the improvement in NWA MAIN EVENT on 1/29. Maybe no football competition can be a key but that show drew its top numbers ever and every match was from other NWA syndicated shows.

Note that the hot 1/21 WCW which saw Ricky Steamboat's return did not go through the roof, though the final quarter-hour did rise to a 3.5 for the Flair defeat. The TBS morning ratings are relative to leads. TBS aired a movie prior to the 1/21 show that drew much better numbers than the usual NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORER lead-in.)

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